

Chief, Economic Research, ORR

3 October 1958

Chief, Materials Division, ORR

Documentation of ERA Reports

REF : Your memo, same subject, 25 September 1958

1. After having considered the proposal advanced at the recent Staff Meeting regarding changes in procedures for documentation and having discussed this with the D/M Branch Chiefs, I feel very strongly that gains from the proposal would not be worth the cost and that present procedures should not be altered.

2. As you note in referenced memo, the objective of eliminating or reducing documentation is to speed up the editing, typing, and reproduction of reports; present procedures for documentation are to be retained through the review stage. This means that the analyst would initially document as he has been doing all along. After review is completed, he would then be asked either to eliminate or to reduce documentation. The question of elimination is discussed below. If documentation were reduced, then the analyst would have to spend additional time preparing a second statement of documentation. Moreover, editing frequently results in the elimination of material and hence in a change in the original list of sources. It would thus be necessary for the analyst to conform his documentation so that a clean and correct copy of the documentation can be deposited in St/PC. Thus, his work load would be increased as compared with the present. I can see no net saving in time for ERA as a whole and I am not wildly in favor of reducing St/PB's load at the expense of the analyst. In addition:

a. If sourcing is done through textual statements, as a partial or complete substitute for source citations, reports will tend to become longer and less readable. In addition, the objections in 3 below would apply, to a lesser degree than for complete elimination of sourcing.

b. If sourcing is done in narrative fashion, in an appendix, the objections in 3 below would also apply, but to a lesser degree than for complete elimination of sourcing.

3. The comments in 2 above beg the question of whether documentation should be eliminated altogether. I would be against doing

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this for the following reasons:

a. We are talking here about a fraction of our production, to wit ER's and FR's. Many DI's are not now documented, and I believe that documentation is the exception rather than the rule. ER's and FR's represent our basic research, which adds to our fund of knowledge, and which serves as support for later research of a more estimative nature. It seems to me that this kind of research requires detailed documentation to accompany the report itself.

b. It is perfectly true that most readers find no occasion ever to check the source references, but it is also true that when a person wants to do so he wants to do so very badly. For example, there have been many frustrations in this Division because we do not know the sources for statements contained in reports.

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c. Even if a reader does not need to look up a particular source reference, he can better judge the depth, nature, and quality of the research if the sources are attached to the report. Reference to a file copy in St/PC is impossible for an outside reader and awkward for an inside reader. Moreover, the documentation attached to a published report becomes as much a part of the record as the report itself. Hence, long after the research is complete and the report published, one can discover from the list of sources the extent of the research and evaluate the validity and currency of the conclusions.

d. Very often a finished report on a given subject will contain material related to another field. In these not infrequent cases, the ready availability of a source reference is a great convenience to the reader in this other field.

e. More generally, the use of source references is one aspect of good scholarship. Although documentation would be maintained through the review stage, so that in principal this proposal would be neutral with respect to the analyst, I

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feared that increasing the quantity of unsourced reports would have an adverse psychological effect on the analyst.

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